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HISTORIC ADDRESS

BY

BROTHER AARON SARGENT

AT THE

DEDICATION

OF THE

MASONIC APARTMENTS IN SOMERVILLE.

OCTOBER 4, 1888.

SOMERVILLE JOURNAL PRINT.

1888.



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HISTORIC ADDRESS.

M. W. GRAND MASTER AND BRETHREN :—

I stand here to-night as the historiographer — by request — of this occasion, and will endeavor to trace with you, as briefly as possible, the rise and the progress to completion of these apartments, now dedicated to Freemasonry, for the use of the craft in this city.

Knickerbocker commences his history of the city of New York with a description of the universe, and sundry theories and speculations concerning the formation and existence of this globe; maintaining that the foundations of the city were laid at the dawn of creation; so you will not be surprised at the assertion, which scarcely commences an approach to the latitude claimed by my Dutch prototype, that the corner-stone of these apartments, though not of the entire structure, was laid more than a score and a half years ago.

Early in the fall of 1857 a few Master Masons, living in different parts of the town, held several informal meetings in what was then known as Union Hall, to take measures towards the formation of a lodge. All necessary arrangements having been made, the officers selected, and the name,—John Abbot, suggested by W. Brother John K. Hall,—having been adopted, by authority of a dispensation from the Grand Master, the first lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in Somerville was opened on the 23d day of October, 1857, with W. Brother Francis L. Raymond, Master; and Brothers Joel F. Thayer, Senior Warden; James R. Bugbee, Junior Warden; Thomas J. Leland, Treasurer; Charles E. Gilman, Secretary; Thomas H. Lord, Senior Deacon; Alexander B. Cleary, Junior Deacon; George O. Brastow, Marshal; James M. Shute, Chaplain; Gardner T. Ring, Senior Steward; Reuben E. Demmon, Junior Steward; Enoch Robinson, Tyler; and W. Brother John K. Hall and Brothers Benjamin Woodward and William F. White as members. These fifteen brothers are my metaphorical corner-stone.

The lodge received its charter and was formally constituted and the lodge room consecrated September 14th, 1858, by Grand Master John T. Heard and the Grand Lodge. The officers installed were W. Brother John K. Hall, Mas-

ter ; and Brothers Joel F. Thayer, Senior Warden ; James R. Bugbee, Junior Warden ; Thomas J. Leland, Treasurer ; Charles E. Gilman, Secretary ; Thomas H. Lord, Senior Deacon ; Alexander B. Cleary, Junior Deacon ; Rollin W. Keyes, Marshal ; James M. Shute, Chaplain ; Philip R. Ridgway, Senior Steward ; William E. Robinson, Junior Steward ; and Caleb Bucknam, Tyler.

Following W. Brother Hall, the Masters have been, in their order, W. Brothers James R. Bugbee, Thomas H. Lord, Philip R. Ridgway, William E. Robinson, Henry F. Woods, Charles H. Delano, Thomas H. Lord again, Selwyn Z. Bowman, Frank S. Hartshorn, Charles H. Taylor, George H. Allen, Charles J. Richardson, Robert Laycock, John B. Viall, T. Gilman Smith, Edward T. Flanagan, and Charles A. Cushman.

Of the original fifteen members, eight are not living, and of the number none took a deeper interest in the lodge than Brother George O. Brastow. From its inception to the close of his life, when other cares and duties or failing health did not prevent, he was a constant attendant at its communications, and heartily gave his support to all things that tended to its prosperity and reputation. The last time he was with us was only a few weeks before his death, and there must be some here to-night who remember,

though they may not be able to repeat, his words of admonition, encouragement, and advice, as we were assembled for social intercourse in the hall beneath the lodge room. His fervent entreaties, approaching almost to sadness, thrilled many a heart then and there, and could they be reproduced, might well be inscribed upon our walls in letters of fire,—precepts for all who may enter our doors.

John Abbot Lodge's charter membership was nineteen brothers. In the thirty-one years of its existence it has raised 376 Master Masons, and has now 187 members.

The first lodge room was a little attic over Union Hall, at the corner of Oak street and Milk street. Mutability of highway titles now makes Oak street to be Beach street, and Milk street Somerville avenue. After about two years the lodge was moved to the story below, on the second floor of the building, where it remained till March 18th, 1869, when Grand Master William S. Gardner and the Grand Lodge dedicated the room in Union Hall building, in Union square ; and moving thence and again, the lodge now finds a permanent abiding place here.

In June and October of the year 1870 the project of forming a Chapter was discussed at two informal meetings held by a few Royal Arch Masons in the ante-room of John Abbot Lodge, and it was decided to take the necessary

steps thereto. The officers were selected, and the name adopted after much discussion and many suggestions, no name seeming to suit till Companion Cunningham — as I remember — remarked, “Why not Somerville? That is good enough;” and responses came, “Sure enough, why not?” and so, as the suggester of the name would say, Somerville Royal Arch Chapter was launched, received her masts and spars, rigging and sails, and so, making use of the same diction, it may be said that through all winds and all weathers, high in the fore-top, the captain (Companion Cunningham) has been on the lookout ever since.

A dispensation having been received from the M. E. Grand High Priest, a Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Somerville was opened on the 27th day of December, 1870, with M. E. Companion Daniel E. Chase, High Priest; and Companions Thomas H. Lord, King; Charles S. Lincoln, Scribe; Horace Haskins, Treasurer; Aaron Sargent, Secretary; Rev. George W. Durell, Chaplain; Charles H. Delano, Captain of the Host; William W. Dow, P. S.; George A. Pratt, Royal Arch Captain; Emery H. Munroe, M. of the Third V.; Robert Hollingsworth, M. of the Second V.; Isaac B. Kendall, M. of the First V.; John W. Vinal and Albro R. Jenness, Stewards; Thomas Cunningham, Tyler; and twelve companions, in addition, as

members, making a total membership of twenty-seven.

The Chapter was formally constituted under its charter October 10th, 1871, by Grand High Priest Henry Chickering and suite; and the officers installed were M. E. Companion Thomas H. Lord, High Priest; and Companions Charles S. Lincoln, King; Charles F. King, Scribe; Horace Haskins, Treasurer; Aaron Sargent, Secretary; Rev. George W. Durell, Chaplain; William W. Dow, Captain of the Host; Isaac B. Kendall, P. S.; George A. Pratt, R. A. Captain; Albro R. Jenness, M. of the Third V.; John W. Vinal, M. of the Second V.; George L. Baxter, M. of the First V.; Charles G. Pope and Horace E. Boynton, Stewards; and Thomas Cunningham, Tyler. The ceremonies were public, the presence of ladies giving additional interest to the occasion.

Succeeding M. E. Companion Lord, the High Priests have been M. E. Companions Charles F. King, Rudolph Kramer, George H. Allen, Thomas H. Lord again (you will notice that Brother Lord has been a repeater), Samuel F. Holt, Quincy E. Dickerman, Frank W. Mead, and Albion H. Libbey. The Chapter had thirty-four charter members. It has exalted 209 Royal Arch Masons, and has now a membership of 165 companions. The convocations have always been held in John Abbot lodge room, and, coming

hither with the lodge, the Chapter has here its future home.

In the spring of 1879, at the residence of Brother Charles Powers, on Pearl street, and at Broadway Hall, several meetings were held by a few brothers living in East Somerville and at Winter Hill, to consider the feasibility of instituting a lodge to be located in the easterly part of the city; and the conclusion was, that there was ample field for another lodge in Somerville. All needful steps having been taken, the officers chosen, and the name, Soley, having been adopted, W. Brother Hall again suggesting the name accepted, on the 19th day of May, 1879, by authority of a dispensation from the Grand Master, the lodge was opened at Broadway Hall, East Somerville, with W. Brother Horace P. Hemenway, Master; W. Brother Henry F. Woods, Senior Warden; W. Brother John Viall, Junior Warden; and Brothers John F. Cole, Treasurer; Aaron Sargent, Secretary; Rev. Edwin J. Gerry, Chaplain; George W. Perkins, Marshal; J. Foster Clark, Senior Deacon; Charles G. Pope, Junior Deacon; Leander M. Haskins, Senior Steward; Charles H. Crane, Junior Steward; William F. Sanborn, Inside Sentinel; George H. Meader and Harry F. Plaisted, Organists; Charles C. Folsom, Tyler; and thirty-three brothers in addition as members, making a total membership of forty-eight.

The formal constitution of the lodge by Grand Master Charles A. Welch and the Grand Lodge, took place April 9, 1880, in Franklin Hall, corner of Broadway and Franklin street, whither the lodge had been removed the summer before. The first officers elected under the charter were the same in the main as at the time of granting the dispensation.

The Masters since W. Brother Hemenway have been, in succession, W. Brothers John Viall, J. Foster Clark, Charles H. Crane, John F. Cole, and Amasa E. Southworth.

As in my sketch of the formation of John Abbot Lodge I alluded to one who was foremost in everything that conduced to its welfare, so now I again digress in this narrative to pay a passing tribute to one who was prominent in the establishment of Soley Lodge. No one took more interest in the new lodge, no one was more ready to give it aid, and no one felt more satisfaction at the work accomplished, as being for the welfare of the whole fraternity in the city, than our late brother, Charles Powers. Only a short time before his death,—it was the last time I saw him,—in the street below us, and scarcely a stone's throw from where we now are, he expressed to me the satisfaction he felt in having been instrumental in forming the new lodge, and the

joy it gave him to know that what he then predicted, increased prosperity to the parent lodge, had come to pass, and was an accepted fact.

Soley Lodge had a charter membership of forty-six brothers. It has raised 116 Master Masons, and has now a membership of 162 brothers.

Here, too, from Franklin Hall, comes Soley Lodge, joining with the older Masonic bodies in this city in establishing one universal dwelling-place.

My record would not be complete as a historical narrative without the statement, that in 1886 about one hundred Master Masons living at and near Winter Hill, thinking the time had come when a lodge might be maintained in that part of the city, took preliminary steps thereto ; and a little later about forty brothers living in the westerly part of the city took measures toward the formation of a lodge in that part of the city known as West Somerville ; but while the matters were in abeyance, some members of the two existing lodges, with one of the petitioners for a new lodge at Winter Hill, conceived the project of the erection of a building on the land beneath our feet for the occupancy of the entire fraternity in the city. It was ascertained that Mr. Rufus B. Stickney, a well-known resident, and the owner of the land, would erect a building with suitable

accommodations. Two trustees from each of the three Masonic bodies were elected, with full powers to execute a lease and make all the needed arrangements. The result you have around you to-night. The architect was Brother George F. Loring, the one petitioner for a new lodge before alluded to; the mason work was by Brother William L. Clark; the carpenter work by Brother Frederick C. Fuller; the plumbing by Brother Frank A. Titus; the heating apparatus by Brother Alexander A. Sanborn,— all affiliated in Somerville; the decorating by Messrs. Wallburg & Woehrn; and the painting by Mr. Frederick W. Johnson. We would not forget the spirit shown by Mr. Stickney in acceding to our requests from time to time. His remark to one of our number, that “If the Masons do not get what they want, it will be their own fault, for I have given them everything they asked for,” tells the whole story.

The furniture was made by Brothers Samuel J. Harrison and James M. and James F. Beard; the carpets were from Brother Albion H. Libbey; the organ was built by Messrs. Hook & Hastings; the gas fixtures came from the Shreve, Crump & Low Company; the draperies from Brother J. A. Glass; the emblem frames from Messrs. Sprague & Hathaway; and the electrical apparatus from Messrs. Kendall & Slade.

The total number of Masons having a membership in Somerville is 398. There are many brothers living within our borders who are not affiliated with us. It is hoped that they will attach themselves to one of the lodges, and while they enjoy the advantages here opened to them, by their presence and their example, aid in sustaining our institution in these commodious apartments.

While it is not, perhaps, quite pertinent to this occasion, the statement may not be uninteresting, that there are in Somerville over one hundred brothers who are also Knight Templars—nineteen being members of Boston Commandery, thirty-five of De Molay, one of St. Bernard, two of Palestine, eight of Hugh De Payens, forty-four of Cœur De Lion, and one of Beauseant.

As my sketch of this temple and the causes which led to its erection approaches its close, permit me to express the hope that we shall continue in all laudable zeal for the glory of the institution in whose name we are assembled, which in precept and principle, and let us hope in practice also, is second to none in the land. Nor would we forget the social side of Freemasonry, and the advantages here offered for its cultivation. Nearly all our joys in life are social in their character,—the home and its surroundings always first; the lodge room and appendant apartments

surpassed only by the home ; and in order, following these, the more public opportunities for friendly intercourse. "We only half enjoy an undivided good," and so we recognize the social qualities of our institution, and would improve all opportunities for rational enjoyment ; for we can live but one life here, or, as Carlyle puts it, "a little gleam of time between two eternities — no second chance to us forevermore." Nor can we live always,— perhaps would not wish to, even if we could,— and must leave to others the care and keeping of our cherished institution. May our successors, in the distant as well as the near future, still lift aloft the banners of our order, pure and spotless.

M. W. GRAND MASTER :—

As in commencing I revealed the corner-stone of these apartments, so now in closing I designate their cap-stone— John Abbot and Soley Lodges, and Somerville Royal Arch Chapter.

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